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College policies differ over working for CIA

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Classified research projects are prohibited at two major research universities in Texas, while another, Texas A&M University, permits professors to work on secret projects for the federal government.

Rice University and University of Houston-University Park do not approve classified research proposals because of longstanding policies against non-publishable work, officials said Monday.

"We believe the role of the faculty is to do research and transmit the results to the public," said Julie Norris, UH assistant provost.

But Dr. Richard Thomas, director of the Texas A&M Center for Strategic Technology and a professor who does classified research, said, "My view is that if my nation needs me, I'm ready to serve it in whatever capacity I can."

Robert Gates, deputy director of the CIA, has confirmed that the agency is contracting more frequently for classified research with university professors, reversing a trend of the 1960s when the CIA was anathema at most college campuses.

Norris said the CIA has contracted with one UH mathematics professor for a \$325,000 unclassified, math research project.

She said the contract, for a two-year study entitled Bifurcation in Rotationally Symmetric Systems, was given to Dr. Martin Golubitsky by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. UH officials found that the CIA sought the project through the umbrella funding agency.

"We were very concerned about it, but we found that the grant is unclassified and the university is free to publish," Norris said.

Officials at Rice, A&M and Texas Southern University said they know of no research projects sought by the CIA at those universities.

Officials at the University of Texas, another major research school, were unavailable for comment.

Thomas said A&M is interested in research in national defense and secu-

rity areas, adding, "If we had an opportunity to work for any of the intelligence agencies, we would not reject that opportunity."

Thomas said he and two other A&M professors with the Center for Strategic Technology are working with defense-related classified projects. Thomas, an aerospace engineer, said he has been involved with secret government research for 30 years and also has published more conventional research projects.

The Center is an interdisciplinary "think tank" that contracts heavily with government agencies, Thomas said.

"Given the rich military tradition of Texas A&M, it is difficult to imagine that it would turn its back on the nation," Thomas said.

But other officials, including Dr. Fred R. von der Mehden of Rice, said university professors should not be involved in classified research, particularly with the CIA.

Von der Mehden, a political science professor who studies Southeast Asia, said, "I wouldn't want to be in a situation where people in a foreign country would think I was operating for an intelligence agency. I can't think of anything that would close more doors."

Von der Mehden said there is no evidence the CIA would be banned from campus if it tried to carry out such activities as recruiting.

"Many faculty feel that the CIA has a useful function, but that function should not be deeply entrenched in the universities," he added.

Norris at UH said it is the more usual view to prohibit classified research by professors, because most officials believe that "faculty must be free to publish the results."

Dr. John L. Margrave, vice-president for advanced studies and research, said Rice's policy dictates that students have access to all laboratories and library areas and that professors' work is to be open.

"The university's main job is education," he said. "University research is supposed to be educational, significant and publishable for the benefit of mankind."